OF THE Characters of Women.

AN EPISTLE TO A LADY.

By Mr. *POPE*.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE Author being very ſenſible how particular a Tenderneſs is due to the FEMALE SEX, and at the ſame time how little they generally ſhow to each other; declares, upon his Honour, that *no one Character* is drawn from the Life, in this Epiſtle. It would otherwiſe be moſt improperly inſcrided to a LADY,

a LADY, who of all the Women he knows, is the laſt that would be entertain'd at the Expence of Another.

OF THE
Characters of Women.
AN
EPISTLE
To a LADY.

NOTHING so true as what you once let fall,
Most Women have no Characters at all.
Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear,
And best distinguish'd by black, brown, or fair.

How many Pictures of one Nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true!

Arcadia's

Arcadia's Countess, here, in ermin'd pride,
There, *Pastorella* by a Fountain side:
Here *Fannia* leering on her own good man,
And there a naked *Leda* with a Swan,
Let then the Fair-one beautifully cry
In *Magdalen*'s loose hair and lifted eye,
Or dress'd in smiles of sweet *Cecilia* shine,
With simp'ring Angels, Palms, and Harps divine;
Whether the Charmer sinner it, or saint it,
When Folly grows romantic, we must paint it.

Come then, the Colours and the ground prepare!
Dip in the Rainbow, trick her off in Air,
Chuse a firm Cloud before it falls, and in it
Catch, e're she change, the *Cynthia* of this minute.

Rufa, whose eye quick-glancing o'er the *Park*,
Attracts each light gay Meteor of a Spark,
Agrees as ill with *Rufa* studying *Locke*,
As *Flavia*'s diamonds with her dirty smock,
Or *Flavia*'s self in glue (her rising task)
And issuing flagrant to an evening Mask:

So

So morning Insects that in Muck begun,
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow, in the setting-sun.

How soft is *Silia*! fearful to offend,
The frail one's Advocate, and weak one's Friend:
To her, *Calista* prov'd her Conduct nice,
And good *Simplicius* asks of her Advice.
Sudden, she storms! she raves! You tip the wink,
But spare your censure; *Silia* does not drink.
All eyes may see from what the change arose,
All eyes may see——a Pimple on her nose.

Papillia, wedded to her am'rous Spark,
Sighs for the Shades——"How charming is a *Park*!
A *Park* is purchas'd, but the Fair he sees
All bath'd in tears——"Oh odious, odious *Trees*!

Ladies like variegated Tulips show,
'Tis to their Changes half their Charms we owe;
Such happy Spots the nice Admirer take,
Fine by defect, and delicately weak.

'Twas thus *Calypso* once our hearts alarm'd,
Aw'd without Virtue, without Beauty charm'd;
Her Tongue bewitch'd as oddly as her Eyes,
Less Wit than Mimic, more a Wit than wise:
Strange Graces still, and stranger Flights she had,
Was just not ugly, and was just not mad;
Yet ne'er so sure our Passion to create,
As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate,

Narcissa's nature, tolerably mild,
To make a Wash would hardly stew a Child;
Has ev'n been prov'd to grant a Lover's pray'r,
And paid a Tradesman once to make him stare;
Gave alms at *Easter*, in a christian trim,
And made a Widow happy, for a whim.
Why then declare Good-nature is her scorn,
When 'tis by that alone she can be born?
Why pique all mortals, yet affect a name?
A Fool to Pleasure, yet a Slave to Fame!
Now deep in *Taylor* and the Book of *Martyrs*,
Now drinking Citron with his Grace and *Chartres*:

Now

Now Conſcience chills her, and now Paſſion burns,
And Atheiſm and Religion take their turns;
A very Heathen in the carnal part,
Yet ſtill a ſad, good Chriſtian at her heart.

Flavia's a Wit, has too much ſenſe to *play*,
To *toaſt* our wants and wiſhes, is her way;
Nor asks of *God* but of her *Stars* to give
The mighty bleſſing, "while we live, to live."
Then all for Death, that Opiate of the Soul!
Lucretia's Dagger, *Roſamonda*'s Bowl.
Say, what can cauſe ſuch impotence of mind?
A Spark too fickle, or a Spouſe too kind.
Wiſe Wretch! of Pleaſures too refin'd to pleaſe,
With too much Spirit to be e'er at Eaſe,
With too much Quickneſs ever to be taught,
With too much Thinking to have common Thought:
You purchaſe Pain with all that Joy can give,
And die of nothing but a Rage to live.

Twin them from Wits; and look on Sloe's Mate,
No Ass so meek, no Ass so obstinate:
Or her, that owns her Faults, but never mends
Because she's honest, and the best of Friends:
Or her, whose Life the Church and Scandal share,
For ever in a Passion, or a Pray'r:
Or who in sweet Vicissitude appears
Of Mirth and Opium, Ratafie and Tears,
The daily Anodyne, and nightly Draught,
To kill those Foes to Fair ones, Time and Thought.
Woman and Fool are two hard Things to hit,
For true No-meaning puzzles more than Wit.

Pictures like these, (dear Madam) to design,
Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line;
Some wandring Touches, some reflected Light,
Some flying Stroke, alone can hit them right:
For how shall equal Colours do the knack,
Camelions who can paint in White and Black?

In publick Stations Men sometimes are shown,
A Woman's seen in Private life alone:

Our

Our bolder Talents in full view diſplay'd,
Your Virtues open faireſt in the Shade.
Bred to diſguiſe, in Publick 'tis you hide;
Where none diſtinguiſh 'twixt your *Shame* and *Pride*,
Weakneſs or *Delicacy*; all ſo nice,
Each is a ſort of *Virtue*, and of *Vice*.

In ſev'ral Men we ſev'ral Paſſions find,
In Women, two almoſt divide the Kind,
Thoſe only fix'd, they firſt or laſt obey;
The Love of Pleaſures, and the Love of Sway.

That, Nature gives; and where the Leſſon taught
Is but to pleaſe, can Pleaſure ſeem a fault?
Experience, This; by Man's Oppreſſion curſt,
They ſeek the ſecond not to loſe the firſt.

Men, ſome to Buſineſs, ſome to pleaſure take,
But every Woman is, at heart, a Rake:
Men, ſome to Quiet, ſome to publick Strife,
But every Lady would be Queen for life.

Yet

Yet mark the fate of a whole Sex of Queens!
Pow'r all their end, but Beauty all the means.
In Youth they conquer with ſo wild a rage,
As leaves them ſcarce a Subject in their Age:
For foreign Glory, foreign Joy, they roam;
No thought of Peace or Happineſs at home.
But Wiſdom's Triumph is well-tim'd Retreat,
As hard a Science to the Fair as Great!
Beauties like Tyrants, old and friendleſs grown,
Yet hate Repoſe, and dread to be Alone,
Worn out in publick, weary ev'ry eye,
Nor leave one ſigh behind them when they die.

Pleaſures the Sex, as Children birds, purſue,
Still out of reach, yet never out of view,
Sure, if they catch, to ſpoil the Toy at moſt,
To covet flying, and regret when loſt:
At laſt, to Follies Youth could ſcarce defend
It grows their Age's prudence to pretend;
Aſham'd to own they gave delight before,
Reduc'd to feign it, when they give no more,

As

As Hags hold *Sabbaths*, less for Joy than spight;
So these their merry, miserable Night;
Still round and round the Ghosts of Beauty glide,
And haunt the Places where their Honour dy'd.

See how the World its Veterans rewards!
A Youth of Frolicks, an old Age of Cards,
Fair to no purpose, artful to no end,
Young without Lovers, old without a Friend,
A Fop their Passion, but their Prize a Sot,
Alive, ridiculous, and dead, forgot!

An Friend! to dazzle let the Vain design,
To raise the Thought and touch the Heart, be thine!
That Charm shall grow, while what fatigues the Ring
Flaunts and goes down, an unregarded thing.
So when the Sun's broad beam has tir'd the sight,
All mild ascends the Moon's more sober light,
Serene in Virgin Modesty she shines,
And unobserv'd the glaring Orb declines.

O'r blest with *Temper!* whose unclouded ray
Can make to morrow chearful as to day;
That pleas'd can see a younger charm, or hear
Sighs for a Sister with unwounded ear;
That ne'er shall answer till a Husband cool,
Or, if you rule him, never show you rule;
Please by receiving, by submitting sway,
Yet have your humour most, when you obey;
Let Fops or Fortune fly which way they will,
Despise all loss of Tickets or Codille;
Spleen, Vapors, or Small-pox, above them all,
And Mistress of yourself, tho' China fall.

And yet belive me, good as well as ill,
Woman's at best a Contradiction still.
Heav'n, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last, best work, but forms a *softer Man*;
Picks from each Sex, to make the Fav'rite blest,
Your love of Pleasure, our desire of Rest,
Blends, in exception to all gen'ral Rules,
Your Taste of Follies, with our Scorn of Fools,

Reserve

Reſerve with Frankneſs, Art with Truth ally'd,
Courage with Softneſs, Modeſty with Pride,
Fix'd Principles, with Fancy ever new;
Shakes all together, and produces—*You*.

Ev'n ſuch is Woman's Fame: With this unbleſt,
Toaſts live a ſcorn, and Queens may die a jeſt.
This *Phœbus* promis'd, I forgot the Year,
When thoſe blue eyes firſt open'd on the Sphere;
Aſcendant *Phœbus* watch'd that hour with care,
Averted half your Parents ſimple Pray'r,
And gave you *Beauty*, but deny'd the *Pelf*
That buys your Sex a Tyrant o'er itſelf:
That gen'rous God, who Wit and Gold refines,
And ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines,
Kept Droſs for Ducheſſes, the world ſhall know it,
To you gave Senſe, Good-humour, and a Poet.

FINIS.

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